

**Richard Brookhiser**

THE GAY HART GAINES DISTINGUISHED VISITING  
LECTURER OF AMERICAN HISTORY, 2016

**WASHINGTON AND POLITICS:  
IN HIS LIFE, AND AFTER**



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S  
**MOUNT ★ VERNON**

## About the Series

In 2016 the United States will hold its 58th presidential election. The framers of the Constitution designed the office of the president with George Washington in mind. He won the first two presidential elections without opposition and saw the birth of the first two-party system. After his death he served as a symbol for the nation, and an example for the men who aspired to fill his shoes. What did Washington think of the American political process? What did his peers and successors think of him? In this turbulent and precedent-shattering political season, what can we learn from his actions and insights, and from the careers of those who knew him, admired him, and fought among themselves to define his legacy?

**Richard Brookhiser** is an American journalist, biographer, and historian. He is a senior editor at *National Review*. For twenty years he wrote a column for the *New York Observer* and has also written for *The New Yorker*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Commentary*, and *Vanity Fair*. He is the author of numerous books about the nation's founding period. He has been awarded the National Medal of the Humanities (2008) and a Guggenheim fellowship (2011).

## The Gay Hart Gaines Distinguished Visiting Lecturer of American History

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association is proud to present this educational series delivered by the Gay Hart Gaines Distinguished Visiting Lecturer of American History, a position established to honor the Association's 18th Regent through the generosity of Lewis E. Lehrman, co-founder of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. This series is designed to provide a deeper understanding of, and expertise in, a particular subject related to George Washington.



## FIRST IN POLITICS

**Wednesday, September 7, 7:00 p.m.**

George Washington led the first successful revolution of the modern era. Like many of his successors—Napoleon, Toussaint L’Ouverture—he was a charismatic military man who made political use of both his reputation on the battlefield and his imposing persona during and after the Revolution. But he expected the United States to be a nation of laws with elected lawmakers—so he also mastered the arts of democratic politics, navigating a series of crises, from the struggle to write and ratify a new Constitution, to the wars unleashed by the French Revolution. Washington did not expect the new American political world to contain political parties, however, and he warned against them in his Farewell Address. It was advice his countrymen would not take.



## THE NEW POLITICAL WORLD

**Tuesday, October 4, 7:00 p.m.**

Washington lived to see the emergence of the first American two-party system: Federalists vs. Republicans (ancestor of today's Democrats, not the GOP). The theorist of permanent political parties was Washington's former protégé, James Madison, the founder, along with Thomas Jefferson, of the Republicans. Washington himself became, in his retirement, a partisan Federalist, urging another protégé, John Marshall, to run for Congress. After Washington died, Marshall became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Jefferson, Madison, and Republicanism triumphed at the polls—leaving Marshall to wage a long rear-guard battle to defend the Constitution as he and the Federalists had understood it. Marshall served until 1835 and set many legal precedents. But the political wheel never turned back; Washington survived as a symbol revered by all Americans and all parties.



## CONTESTED SYMBOL

**Wednesday, November 2, 7:00 p.m.**

The young United States was proud of its origins, conscious of its specialness, and anxious about its destiny. What guidance could it take from Washington? Early nineteenth-century Americans revered him as an icon and used him as a moral example. As the struggle over slavery deepened, all sides sought to claim him. Perhaps he symbolized the Union; perhaps he and the other founders intended to make a nation forever half-slave and half-free. Abraham Lincoln, inspired by his youthful reading of Parson Weems, saw Washington as a hero of liberty. Robert E. Lee, husband of Mary Custis, chose his state over his country. Washington would not have been surprised by these disagreements: he knew that politics was full of choices, and that the future would be up to us.

## **Location**

All programs take place in the Robert H. and Clarice Smith Auditorium located at the Mount Vernon Inn complex. Receptions and book-signings will take place in the same facility immediately following the lectures. The most convenient parking is in the public lot west of the George Washington Parkway.

## **Fees**

Series subscription, including three talks and three receptions: \$175 (\$150 to members and donors). This is a ticketless event. Your name will be on a reservation list at the door. If the series is sold out, you will be contacted before the first lecture and your money will be refunded. For more information, please call 703.799.8686.

## **Dinner at Mount Vernon**

Those who wish to have dinner before or after the presentations should contact the Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant directly at 703.780.0011, or at [OpenTable.com](http://OpenTable.com).

The Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington is the preeminent center of learning about George Washington, his life, character of leadership, and legacy. In addition to safeguarding original books and manuscripts, the Library serves as a center for leadership, where scholars, influencers, and other luminaries come together to talk about the past as well as the future, inspired by Washington's extraordinary life, achievements, and character.

**Cover Image:** President George Washington sat for this portrait in 1795, by Charles Willson Peale.

**Interior (left to right):** Forensic model of President Washington taking the oath of office; Washington's terrestrial globe; and *The Apotheosis of Washington* by Constantino Brumidi, from the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol.



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AT MOUNT VERNON